

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1132

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12250

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: USINJC, PFOR, TECH, IN

SUBJ: REFUTATION OF GERM WARFARE CHARGES

REF: A. NEW DELHI 10848

B. STATE 208236

1. EMBASSY SCI/ATT MET SEPT 8 WITH ADDITIONAL RECRE-TARY FOR HEALTH, MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING, KARTAR SINGH AND DIRECTOR GENERAL, INDIAN COUNCIL FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH, DR. C. GOPALAN TO DISCUSS STATUS OF MOHFP STATEMENT ON MOSQUITO GENETIC PROJECT PREPARED FOR LOK SABHA IN ANSWER TO PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE REPORT (REFTEL A). BOTH GOPALAN AND SINGH INDICATED THAT THE MINISTRY HAD COMMENTED ON EACH OF THE "CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS" IN THE PAC REPORT AND WHERE THERE WERE DISCRIPANCIES SUCH AS THE GERM WARFARE ALLEGATION, THESE WERE STRONGLY REFUTED THEY SAID. THE REPORT'S INTERPRETATION OF THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT, SUCH AS THE REASONS FOR THE INVESTIGA-TIONS OF THE VARIOUS SPECIES OF MOSQUITORS, AEGYPTI VERSUS ANOPHELES ETC.; THE LOCATIONS FOR RELEASE OF STERILE MOSQUITOS AND THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF CERTAIN STRAINS WERE A COMPLETE DISTORTION OF THE FACTS. THESE WERE SET STRAIGHT STEP BY STEP IN MONFP

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STATEMENT. HOWEVER, WHERE THE PAC REPORT RECOMMENDED

THE PROJECT WITH WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION SHOULD BE TERMINATED IMMEDIATELY THE MINISTRY DECIDED TO LET THE AGREEMENT RUN ITS COURSE AND TERMINATE AUTOMATICALLY ON JUNE 30, 1975. DR. GOPOLAN SAID THE MOHFP STATEMENT PROPOSED THAT THE PROJECT WOULD BE RECAST TO BE COMPLETELY OPERATED BY THE ICMR WITH NO OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE, AND THE ANOPHELES MOSQUITO (CARRIER OF MALARIA) WOULD BE THE PRIMARY SUBJECT OF INVESTIGATION. THE PROJECT LOCATION WOULD ALSO BE CHANGED TO PONDICHERY OR ANOTHER SOUTHERN LOCATION AS SOON AS FUNDS WERE FORTHCOMING FROM THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE. (GOPOLAN SAID HE HAD ASKED FOR RS 1.5 MILLION TO CONTINUE THE PROJECT BUT HAD SO NLR RECEIVED NOTHING OR HEARD NOTHING FROM FINANCE.)

2. MR SINGH REMARKED THAT THE STATEMENT WAS SNET TO THE LOK SABHA AS REQUESTED BY THE PAC AND TO HIS KNOWLEDGE WOULD NOT BE MADE PUBLIC UNTIL THE PARLIAMENT MEETS, PERHAPS IN NOVEMBER AND THE ISSUE IS BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE IN PUBLIC DEBATE, WHICH HE BELIEVES IT WILL. HE FURTHER STATED THAT THIS QUESTION WAS DISCUSSED BY THE CABINET WITH THE PM AND IT WAS AGREED THAT THE MOHFP HAD A GOOD CASE AND THE PAC REPORT, CONSIDERING THE SOURCE, WAS MOSTLY HOGWASH (AS HE PUT IT). THE MOHFP FELT IT WAS NO LONGER VERY IMPORTANT ANYWAY SINCE JYOTIRMOY BOSU, CHAIRMAN OF THE PAC AT THAT TIME, IS NOW IN JAIL.

COMMENT:

3. IT HAS BEEN OUR CONSISTENT VIEW THAT THE ATTACKS ON JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS WITH THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH HAVE BEEN ATTACKS ON THE GOI ITSELF AND SHOULD THEREFORE BE ANSWERED BY THE GOI. MINISTER KARAN SINGH HAS IN THE PAST ACCEPTED THIS VIEW AND HAS SPOKEN UP IN THEIR DEFENSE, PARTICULARLY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO THE PARLIAMENT FOLLOWING THE PRESS ATTACK. FOR THIS BACKGROUND SEE NEW DELHI 10111 JULY 30, 1974, AND NEW DELHI 10112 JULY 30, 1974.

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IN THE CASE OF THE PAC REPORT, THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IS DEFENDING ITS POSITION AND WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD PERMIT THE PROCESS TO PROCEED WITHOUT INSISTING ON PREMATURE PUBLICATION OF THE GOI STATEMENT. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT WE SHOULD INSIST UPON AN IRONCLAD GUARANTEE OF GOI MINISTERIAL SUPPORT TO JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS IN ONE OF THE JOINT COMMISSION DOCUMENTS.

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